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**UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE**  
**National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration**  
NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE

Restoration Center  
9721 Executive Center Drive N.  
St. Petersburg, Florida

May 12, 1998

Mr. Sam Zamani, P.E.  
Administrator  
Phosphate Management  
Department of Environmental Protection  
Southwest District  
3804 Coconut Palm Drive  
Tampa, Florida 33619

Re: Mulberry Phosphates, Inc. December 1997 Acid Spill  
- Immediate Release of Juvenile Snook

Dear Mr. Zamani:

This letter will confirm that NOAA's Damage Assessment and Restoration Program (DARP) concurs with the present release of approximately 180 moderately sized, juvenile snook into the Alafia River, as was considered and recommended at the Alafia River damage assessment meeting among the agencies held on April 20, 1998.

The fish in question were reared from local genetic stock for use in anticipated research, but because their numbers exceed current research needs, we understand these fish are eligible for immediate release in the Tampa Bay area. Further, the size of the fish is likely to improve their prospects for survival following release. As a result of these circumstances, the agencies have had a unique opportunity to consider the release of these fish into the Alafia River as an early restoration action for natural resource injuries which occurred as a result of the Mulberry Phosphates, Inc. December 1997 acid spill.

Although the release of these fish alone will not restore or compensate for the fishery losses which occurred following the spill, NOAA supports the release of these particular fish as an appropriate, interim measure which will be helpful in restoring snook in the affected system. Significant numbers of snook and other recreationally important fish were killed in the Alafia River as a result of the spill; the ability to act so quickly to replace moderately sized, juvenile snook so soon after the spill should benefit the recovery of snook populations within the river. Actions which facilitate or expedite the recovery of injured resources reduce the amount of interim losses for which compensation is required and generally result in more cost-effective restoration efforts



overall. NOAA understands that the fish will be held at SERF's hatchery while they are reacclimated to appropriate salinities, tagged, and health-certified prior to release.

NOAA looks forward to continuing cooperation with FDEP and the other agencies coordinating the damage assessment for this spill. Future restoration options are being identified and will be evaluated as part of that ongoing process.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'John Iliff', written in a cursive style.

John Iliff  
NMFS Restoration Center

cc: Lisa DiPinto, DAC  
Stephanie Fluke, GCNRSE  
Tony Penn, DAC  
George Henderson, FDEP  
David Thulman, FDEP  
Joe King, Polk County, Div. of Natural Resources  
Patricia Cortelyou-Hamilton, DOI  
Erik Orsak, USFWS  
Robin Nims-Elliott, USFWS  
Sara Fotopulos, EPC of Hillsborough County  
Tom Cardinale, EPC of Hillsborough County